
Correctional Service of Canada Prison Libraries from 1980 to 2010

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ABSTRACT

The last three decades have seen many developments in Canadian prison libraries. This article follows the history of the libraries in federal Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) from the 1980s to the present, concentrating on the libraries in the Pacific Region. A chronological overview of the major legislative changes, reports, and events of the last thirty years highlights the increased profile of prison libraries and their role in supporting Correctional Service of Canada's Mission and Goals. Some of these changes include the adoption in 1992 of the Corrections and Condition Release Act (CCRA) and Regulations, modifications to *Commissioner's Directive 720* (2007a; under which libraries fall), and the adoption in the Pacific Region of Library Policy Guidelines. In addition to legislative and policy changes, Canadian society itself has also changed during this thirty-year period. As the face of Canada has become more diverse in age and ethnicity, as well as in social and technological expectations, so has the face of the prison population. These changes have, of course, also impacted on prison libraries. This article examines how prison libraries have met the challenges created by these societal and technological changes.

INTRODUCTION

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is a federal agency within the government of Canada's Public Safety Portfolio. CSC administers court-imposed sentences of two years or more, managing institutions of various security levels, preparing inmates for safe and timely release, and supervising offenders under conditional release and long-term supervision in

the community. CSC has approximately 13,208 incarcerated offenders and 8,720 offenders supervised in the community. Institutional libraries offer services only to the incarcerated population. In addition to healing lodges, parole offices, and community correctional centers, CSC manages fifty-seven institutions of various security levels (Correctional Service of Canada, 2009).

Canada has two official languages: English and French. In this article either language may be referred to as primary or secondary.

POPULATION PROFILE

Between 1997 and 2005, CSC identified the following changes to the offender population:

- Nine out of twenty offenders have previous criminal convictions.
- Thirteen percent of offenders are classified as maximum security at time of admission.
- One in six men and one in ten women have known affiliations with gangs or organized crime.
- More than one of four male offenders is serving a sentence for homicide.
- Twelve percent of male and 26 percent of female offenders are identified with very serious mental health problems.
- There are an increasing number of offenders with learning disabilities and other functional disabilities.
- About four of five offenders arrive with a serious substance abuse problem, with half having committed their crime under the influence.
- There is an increasing rate of infectious diseases, in particular Hepatitis C.

CSC statistics show an increase in the number of offenders serving sentences of three years or less, while one of four male offenders and one of five female women offenders are serving life sentences.

Aboriginal offenders are disproportionately represented at all levels of the Canadian criminal justice system. At the end of March 2009, Aboriginal people comprised 17.3 percent of federally sentenced offenders, while the general Aboriginal population is 2.7 percent of the Canadian adult population (Correctional Service of Canada, 2010b).

A 1997 CSC report (Boe, 1998) found that of offenders admitted into the custody of CSC, 64 percent had not completed their high school diploma, and of those, 30 percent had not even completed the eighth grade. Standard literacy testing of offenders entering federal custody confirmed these statistics: Seventy percent score below a Grade 8 literacy level; more than 86 percent test below Grade 10; and the average inmate scores at approximately Grade 7.5.

Correctional Process

After sentencing, an offender is admitted to a Regional Reception Centre for assessment. Based on the assessment results, CSC develops a detailed correctional plan for each offender to help address his or her criminogenic factors. During this process, the offender's security classification (minimum, medium, or maximum) is also determined. The correctional plan is updated throughout the offenders' incarceration.

Once placed at an institution, the offender is assigned to a case management team (CMT). The CMT's objective is to help the inmate resolve his or her criminogenic problems and to have the inmate's security classification reduced before release.

When day parole or statutory release eligibility dates approach, case preparation begins in cooperation with members of the community into which the offender will be released under supervision. In the community, the offender continues to work with a CMT, following a correctional plan that is regularly updated to indicate progress and compliance with conditions established by the National Parole Board. The CMT continues to reinforce progress and works to mitigate risk.

Lifers remain under CSC jurisdiction for life, whether they are incarcerated or under community supervision (Correctional Service of Canada, 2007b).

Correctional Programs

With the objective of ensuring the offender's safe return to the community and enhancing his or her chances for getting and holding a job, CSC offers a variety of accredited cognitive intervention programs to help address attitudes and thinking patterns that lead to committing crimes, and to improve social and educational skills. These correctional programs focus on

- cognitive skills
- anger management
- violent behavior and prevention
- substance abuse
- sexual deviance
- family violence
- education
- literacy
- Aboriginal programming
- women-specific programming (Correctional Service of Canada, 2010a).

CSC LIBRARIES

The last three decades have seen many developments in Canadian prison libraries. In the 1980s, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) commissioned two national reports on institutional library services across the country. These reports were followed by an analysis of institutional library services spearheaded by two librarians in the Pacific Region. As we shall see, these reports defined and emphasized the role of prison libraries and made recommendations to confirm and support this role. The first of these was the Nason Report (1981), which was commissioned by the Education and Training Division of the Inmate Employment Branch in CSC. The report was published the same year.

THE NASON REPORT—1981

In his introduction, Nason (1981) states:

Effective library support is essential, for example, to the Education and Training Programme, to counseling activities, and to chaplaincy services. Inmate boredom and the tense environment found in certain prisons can be, at least partially, relieved by good library services. The library contributes in this way to the custody of inmates by providing a means of dynamic rather than static control. (p. 2)

This statement shows that the report recognized that prison libraries were not stand-alone entities, but integral parts of correctional programs and institutional security.

What Kind of Library Service Should Be Provided?

The author recognized that prison libraries would have two distinct user groups: prison staff and inmates. These two user groups would “place different demands on the resources of the library” (Nason, 1981, p.4). Both groups were recognized as being diverse in age, language, culture, and education. It was also noted that populations within an institution could change rapidly. To accommodate these differences and rapid changes, a recommendation of prison libraries having a general rather than a specialized scope was made. It was also recommended that librarians actively discover and meet their community needs.

To meet these needs and challenges, Nason examined what type of library model was best suited for prison libraries and recommended the public library model, as defined by the Canadian Library Association (CLA) objectives for public libraries, while recognizing that certain modifications had to be made, due to the unique requirements of the prison environment. Nason also felt that the libraries should provide services and materials comparable to those of the public libraries, while also supporting prison programs, providing cultural influence, meeting the special

needs of ethnicity, language, and literacy, providing materials for recreation, and contributing to a humane and pleasant environment.

Means of Delivery

Nason believed that the best method of delivery of library services revolved around a core collection at the facility it was to serve. The core collection should emulate that of the public library, and the library space should have similar areas for the cultural, educational, and recreational uses of its patrons. The core collection should be enhanced by the use of community resources like interlibrary loans from community libraries, as well as outreach services for language materials, information services, and even museum extension services. Utilizing community resources would also reduce duplication and thereby reduce costs for the prison libraries.

It was strongly felt that community resources should only augment the prison library and its services, not replace them, especially in light of the fact that public libraries are usually under provincial mandate and therefore not authorized or funded to provide services to federal patrons who may not be residents of their service community. The author also noted that provincial public library systems were already pressed for adequate resources.

Library Standards

Nason noted a serious lack of national policy and standard methods for prison library operation, so he reviewed existing standards for prison libraries, including the United Nations *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (1955), and the American Correctional Association *Manual of Correctional Standards* (1966). He then proposed standards derived from those sources, but adapted to Canada.

The proposal included a recommendation for the issuance of a Commissioner's Directive with a policy statement on library services delivery, which would include the following guidelines:

- Provide services as comparable as possible to those of a public library
- Provide an institution-wide service to inmates and staff
- Participate in interlibrary loan programs and use community resources
- Provide adequate materials for legal research, especially criminal law
- Have a collection of adequate size to meet these goals
- Have a written policy
- Have materials formally organized for bibliographic control
- Make the library functional in design and inviting in appearance

It was also recommended that the institution

- ensure that inmates have adequate access to library services;
- have a qualified full-time librarian on staff whose sole duty is the operation of library services;

- ensure the library is sufficiently funded to maintain a viable library facility.

Reader Services

Under the heading of "Reader Services," Nason examined library programs, collection development, and censorship and selection policy.

Library Programs. Given the state of the prison libraries at the time of the report, Nason considered a plan for the development of specific library programs as premature but did identify a need for literacy development, information services, and book discussion groups.

To improve literacy, the report recommended that libraries support the formal literacy (education) programs in the institution and include materials for new readers in the collection. Information services should include general reference materials and those reference materials specific to the institution (Standing Orders, procedures, etc.). Book discussion groups were proposed as a way to expose individuals to different kinds of books and new ideas. The report mentioned that even outside the formal therapeutic model of bibliotherapy, books can exert a strong influence.

Collection Development. In his examination of existing collections, Nason (1981) found that the elimination of the regional librarian position in each of the Regional Headquarters had resulted in the legal collections (previously maintained by these librarians) no longer being systematically maintained and revised. He considered the library collections inadequate and blamed this on "the lack of professional direction provided to the individual librarian," the "limited acquisition budget," and the "lack of training and experience" of library staff (Nason, 1981, p. 25). He recommended the development of a selection policy, weeding of collections, and making library staff aware of selection tools in general use by public libraries.

Censorship and Selection Policy. The report mentioned the legal basis for censorship, but noted that "no Commissioner's Directive has been promulgated on censorship of reading materials based on the regulation" (Nason, 1981, p. 26). Practices varied from site to site. Some sites gave either the librarian or a library board the discretion to ban materials but did not provide any guidelines for evaluation of content. Other sites had elaborate guidelines. The report recommended a corporate (i.e., national) policy.

In examining the issue of censorship within the provincial correctional ministries, Nason found that Alberta and Ontario did not have a censorship policy but did have a selection policy. This model was recommended, so that library staff could focus on the positive obligation of selecting wisely rather than engaging in the negative activity of censorship.

Nason found that librarians on the whole appeared poorly informed about existing selection tools and the use of selection criteria.

Recommendations were therefore made to develop selection criteria based on the objectives of enabling the "self-improvement" of inmates and on building balanced collections similar to those of a public library.

Technical Services

The author commented on an apparent tendency for the librarian to concentrate efforts on clerical aspects of the job (particular mention is made of payment records) to the "detriment of the more professional task of maintaining an acceptable standard in cataloguing" (Nason, 1981, p. 33). To simplify tasks, the author recommended using library jobbers and perhaps even jobber cataloging services. When original cataloging must be done, the minimum standard level was recommended. Many institutional libraries did not have subject, author, or title catalogs, or even shelf lists. Using AACR2 standards in establishing library catalogs was recommended. Also recommended was the use of commercial jobbers for acquisitions instead of retail suppliers.

Personnel

Nason cited administrative indifference in the selection of institutional librarians, finding only a handful of trained library technicians and librarians employed in the institutional libraries. Mention was also made of vacant positions not being filled promptly, leading to the interruption in library services for prolonged periods of time and the loss of FTE positions associated with those vacancies.

The report called for seven additional FTE positions immediately to fill library vacancies in maximum and medium facilities. Some sites had made library service the responsibility of an inmate worker rather than a qualified employee. Nason pointed out this was not a satisfactory situation, since peer pressure from other inmates could distract from the main functions of a library and the facility could become an area for illegal activity. Even where library function was not compromised, Nason felt that the inmate "librarian" had insufficient authority over fellow inmates to ensure a well-run operation.

Recommendations for library staff qualifications included a certificate as a library technician, a degree in education with coursework in library management, or a master's degree in library science (or its equivalent). Nason included a new job description for institutional librarians and recommended that it be adopted with the listed minimum qualifications.

Organization

Frequent transfer of responsibility for the operation of institutional libraries was considered very detrimental. While Nason examined some provincial models where site librarians work under the Ministry Library, it was noted that this model would be difficult to emulate in CSC, because the Correctional Service is a separate agency of a federal level ministry

(the Solicitor General at that time). Nason, however, lauded the recent decision of having the assistant warden of education and training, as the librarian's immediate supervisor, as it was felt that reporting at a higher level of management would give the libraries a higher profile.

To combat the frustration librarians felt at the lack of administrative consistency, professional direction, and professional isolation, Nason recommended the hiring of a librarian at National Headquarters to direct the operation and development of institutional libraries nationally (a job description for this position was included in the report), and the designation of an institutional librarian in each region to chair a Regional Library Committee (made up of institutional librarians), which would meet regularly.

Library Facilities

Due to recurring concerns the librarians had expressed about the poor access to library facilities at many sites, Nason recommended that the location of the libraries be reviewed with an eye on improving the physical access and locating the space in closer proximity to inmate housing and the school. When security restrictions, movement schedules, etc., inhibit access to the library, the librarian was encouraged to accommodate the delivery of library services to the demands of security. This accommodation might include making a formal schedule for inmate visits to the library and/or circulating materials to the living units.

It was also recommended that, when the librarian is absent, a substitute be called in, and that collective agreements and job descriptions be amended to make it possible to keep the library open in the evening, where demand warrants. The space layout of the library should also allow for visual supervision of inmates by the librarian, should be conveniently located for maximum access, and should be open and of attractive design.

Resources Required

Nason provided a comparison of expenditure for prison libraries across Canada for 1979-1980 and the approved budget for 1981-82, which showed great disparity in financial support for institutional libraries. British Columbia was cited as a region where library services as a whole were underfinanced both in staff and other resources.

A recommendation was provided for a formula for financial support for libraries, though this formula was to be considered strictly as the minimum for adequate service. The report included equations for sites with both fewer and more than four hundred inmates. Sites with fewer than four hundred inmates should have \$11,000 for acquisitions along with smaller amounts for equipment, supplies, etc., for a total materials/equipment budget of \$15,750. Sites with over four hundred inmates should have \$17,000 for acquisitions (again with smaller amounts for other operational costs), for a

total budget of \$24,000. The recommended amounts were based on actual expenditures at an institutional library, with reference to standards from both the United States and Great Britain. At the minimum, the author called for 1,500 new items per year at sites with fewer than four hundred inmates, and 2,800 new items per year at sites with over four hundred inmates. Nason also recommended increased levels of staffing, including the addition of four FTE positions for the libraries in British Columbia.

Performance Measurement

Nason noted that evaluating library performance was difficult to do objectively. He commented that while there was the impression of hard work and dedication, there was also evidence that many institution staff members had a negative view of library services.

The biggest obstacle to objective measurement was the lack of statistics. Nason therefore recommended that all institutional libraries keep uniform statistics on circulation, reference questions, and ILL's for staff and inmates. Statistics on collection development (discards and acquisitions) and technical services were also recommended, and tables were provided to collect such data. In addition to keeping statistics, "occasional surveys of specific programmes instituted" (Nason, 1981, p.76) were recommended, along with consistent annual reporting, to draw attention to these programs. And the entire library operation should be reviewed every two years.

The conclusion of the Nason Report summarized all the recommendations noted under each section.

PEAT MARWICK REPORT—1984

The chief of education and training, at CSC National Headquarters (NHQ) commissioned another report on institutional libraries in 1984. He was looking for a broad understanding of the roles and functions of institutional libraries across Canada and those working in them. To produce this report, Peat Marwick and Partners utilized four methods of information gathering: (1) a survey to provide a picture of the current library situation, (2) interviews with National Headquarters staff, (3) site visits in Alberta, and (4) a review of relevant documents and literature. The report itself was divided into three sections: (1) introduction, (2) analysis of the interviews, survey documents, and literature review, and (3) relevant issues and recommendations.

Introduction

The report was commissioned due to concerns over the inequities that existed among the prison libraries across the country and from the desire to seek practical solutions to these problems.

Headquarters/Education and Training felt that library services should be "available *equally* to all inmates" (Peat Marwick and Partners, 1984, p. I.1),

so Peat Marwick and Partners started by defining the present situation on a national basis. To accomplish this, they designed a survey to produce a basic picture of libraries and their existing services. After the survey, they conducted interviews with staff in the Education and Training Department at National Headquarters, as well as with staff at the Ministry Library (Solicitor General). Lastly, site visits in Alberta were conducted, which included viewing the libraries in action and interviewing various levels of staff, including those who worked both inside and outside the libraries.

From the information gathered, a statement of issues was developed related to areas where change could be made without hampering the goals of all three levels of management, as well as to where improvements could be made that would ensure equitable library service to inmates in all institutions.

Results of the Information Gathering

This section started by describing the mandate of the libraries and their position within Education and Training. This mandate focused on Commissioner's Directive 500-3-01 (November 30, 1982), which was established pursuant to Subsection 29 (3) of the Penitentiary Act and the authority that was derived from Penitentiary Regulations, Section 31. The Directive outlined the policy on the establishment of an adequate and efficient institutional library service and included the statement that the library will facilitate self-improvement with the following directives in mind:

- General reference material will be available, as well as specific materials to meet the needs for academic studies, vocational interest, and legal information.
- Support will be provided for various programs in the institution, including academic, vocational, chaplaincy, and case management.
- General cultural influence materials will be available.
- Specific cultural needs related to ethnicity, language, and literacy will be recognized and relevant materials made available.
- Books, music, and other materials for recreation will be provided.
- Materials and services that contribute to a humane and pleasant environment will be provided.
- Reading materials that are normally available to the public will be available to inmates.
- Maximum, medium, and multi-security level sites will have a collection comparable to that of a public library with minimum security sites having at least some level of library services.
- The library will provide reference and other materials for the use of institution staff to assist them in their job duties.
- The institution will observe the *UN standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners* and reference the *American Correctional Association Accreditation*

Standards, since both documents emphasize the integral role of the library in a penitentiary system.

Survey Analysis

Peat Marwick and Partners found very little data on prison libraries when they began their data collection. The hope was that the new survey would provide a more complete picture of the federal institution libraries. Thirty-two replies were received, with four being late and their data therefore not included in the analysis. The response rate was only 74.4 percent, which was not as high as anticipated.

General Findings

Of the twenty-eight responses included in the analysis, twenty-seven sites reported having some kind of on-site permanent library collection. The one exception was a lower security level site in the Pacific Region. Small satellite or housing unit collections appeared to be common in higher level sites, along with cell delivery of books and other materials. Hours of library service during the week averaged 6.3 hours per day, although two sites reported no hours of service at all. Weekend service was minimal or nonexistent.

Library Staff

Five professional librarians and ten library technicians responded. It is unclear what level of training or qualifications the other thirteen respondents had, or if they had any library qualifications at all. Inmates were specifically identified as clerical workers.

Over 60 percent of respondents were CSC employees rather than contract employees, and there seemed to be a correlation between contract staff and lower security levels. Over 50 percent of respondents reported that they also had job duties outside the library. It should be noted that six of those responses were from sites where the library was not the respondent's primary responsibility.

Budgets

Library budgets varied widely, with the average expenditures being \$9,500. This number may, however, be misleading, as some sites did not have a separate library budget, with library expenditures included in the total Education and Training budget.

Some libraries were not able to report what amounts were spent on collection development in the various collection areas: recreational materials, reference titles, support materials for institution programs, audio-visual materials, serials, newspapers, legal materials, and supplies/other. No differentiation was made between the primary and the secondary language of the area.

Facilities

Library facilities were surveyed, and the majority of replies indicated that the library space area provided was not adequate for the number of patrons and materials. It was noted that this lack of space led a number of sites to weed their collections on a yearly basis, although at that time such frequent weeding was not considered the norm in nonprison libraries.

Materials

The collections were noted as being rather small, and second-language materials were especially underrepresented, with over half of respondents reporting their nonprimary language collections as being inadequate or nonexistent. In general, larger institutions (those with over four hundred inmates) were most satisfied with their collections, and security level did not appear to impact this sentiment.

Legal materials in both the primary and the secondary language were even less adequate at all sites. Forty percent of the sites reported having no legal materials at all in a secondary language. The majority of respondents reported no audio recordings or job market materials in the secondary language. Basic literacy material in either language was also found to be missing at the majority of sites.

Services

Services like reference (legal and nonlegal), reader advisory, and interlibrary loan, were considered satisfactory at best by the majority of the librarians, although almost 30 percent rated legal reference as outstanding.

Film showings and book talks were virtually nonexistent. In many of the institutions where libraries were supervised by Education and Training, the libraries did not provide support for the education programs. Cooperative relationships with other staff appeared to be infrequent, with respondents from forty sites feeling that such relationships were unsatisfactory or nonexistent.

Larger sites indicated higher satisfaction with user accessibility, and a majority felt that access to the collection was adequate or better. Only three sites considered access to be inadequate or nonexistent.

While over 85 percent of libraries had some form of catalog, many still did not have a subject list or shelf list of any kind, and smaller sites with lower security levels had no catalog. This lack was seen as particularly disappointing, since this matter had been addressed previously in the Nason Report.

Additional Information

Smaller sites did not report collecting usage statistics, even though this matter had also been addressed by Nason. The report drew a parallel between the lack of statistics and a lower level of trained staff, observing "more inmate than staff assistance" at those sites (Peat Marwick and Partners, 1984, p. II.11).

The Peat Marwick questionnaire asked about the use of “current awareness tools.” This question was not well understood by most of the respondents, so no analysis of what may or may not have been provided was made. Similarly, the majority of libraries did not respond with any information about future plans.

A large number of librarians indicated that while they belonged to or had contact with library associations or other professional groups, they wanted more contact with other correctional librarians. This theme of isolation was also mentioned in the interviews. Working alone in a library, often at times when other staff are not present, only contributed to this feeling. Many of the librarians also expressed the need for some centralized direction of prison libraries.

Interview Analysis

Five institutional librarians were interviewed (one in Quebec, one in Ontario, and three in Alberta). They all mentioned the Nason Report and expressed their disappointment about the fact that so few of Nason’s recommendations had been implemented by the time the Peat Marwick Report was commissioned.

The interviews revealed another common concern about the unrealistic volume of work expected of a single librarian, who usually works alone or with only inmate workers—whom the librarian was also supposed to train. Inmates were also perceived as a clientele that needed a trained librarian available during all open hours. This requires a constant presence (often at night) and leaves very little time for other tasks like selection and ordering of materials, cataloging, support of nonlibrary programs (most of which run during the day), and contact with other staff.

The Peat Marwick Report also examined relevant literature and documents concerning prison libraries, including the 1981 Nason report. The authors felt that very little had changed in the interim, so they refrained from commenting on the earlier report other than reiterating the need for adopting the public library model and the uniform standards recommended by Nason.

The majority of the other publications examined by the Peat Marwick authors was from the United States and therefore not considered particularly relevant to Canadian circumstances, although several of the U.S. articles also mentioned the same complaints about professional isolation and misunderstanding by management. At the end, no practical solutions or alternatives for a national system of prison libraries were found in the existing literature.

Issues and Problems

Human Resource Management. The Peat Marwick Report identifies several human resources issues of particular concern, echoing the 1981 Nason Report. The wide variation in staff training qualifications from site to site

(from inmate workers only or civilian clerks with little library experience to librarians with MLS degrees remained a concern). Most staff reported a lack of training in CSC matters. The report references the *American Correctional Association (ACA) Standards* requirement that the libraries be run by staff with minimum qualifications of a bachelor's degree, and that libraries with populations over one hundred have a staff of three people (Peat Marwick and Partners, 1984, p. III.1).

An "us vs. them" atmosphere was noted as a particular problem between professional librarians (with MLS degree) and library technicians, both feeling that their training was adequate to the job at hand. And since no central authority within CSC had sufficient knowledge of library management, a negative situation prevailed with uneven services to inmates, varying standards in cataloging, and inequities in staffing and library hours. This lack of direction and operation was seen by Peat Marwick as a major factor contributing to the low morale felt by library staff. The report noted that a majority of librarians felt that only the inmates and they themselves attached any real value to their work and accomplishments.

Collections. The Peat Marwick Report stated: "It is absolutely essential that attention be given to a basic prison library collection, in both official languages, and that funds are made available to ensure their basics" (Peat Marwick and Partners, 1984, p. III.2). Many areas of the collection, however, were seen as inadequate, including reference materials in both the primary and secondary language of the site, literacy materials (including talking books), legal materials (in both official languages), job market materials, and audio-visual materials.

Services. Good quality catalogs with proper subject headings, catalog maintenance, and shelf lists were recommendations repeated from the Nason Report. Circulation procedures, hours of service, unavailability of interlibrary loan (lack of support from community libraries and lack of recourse, should a book be lost), lack of library support for institution programs (often due to the library's location or odd hours of service), are all problems noted under the heading of Public Service. The lack of uniform guidelines and funding for collection development was also seen as a serious problem.

Facilities. Library facilities were found to be crowded, with no private space for research (especially legal research). The crowding also contributed to the perception that the library is an ideal place for hiding of contraband items.

Recommendations

Peat Marwick and Partners make the following recommendations:

- Employ a National Headquarters librarian with MLS qualifications to coordinate the activities of CSC libraries nationally
- Develop collection standards with lists of mandatory materials

- Develop operation procedures and a detailed manual for each site
- Develop uniform position descriptions and adopt uniform job qualifications
- Create the position of regional librarian in each region (BLS degree minimum) and identify the responsibilities of this position
- Require that civilian site library staff have a minimum library technician qualifications
- Maintain sufficient staffing levels to ensure that the library is operating effectively and efficiently. Recommended staffing levels would be: Sites with fewer than 200 inmates have a part-time library technician and a clerk available daily (possibly with some weekend hours); sites with 200-350 inmates have a part-time clerk and full-time library technician; and institutions with populations over 350 have a full-time clerk and a full-time library technician. It was noted that these recommended levels, while higher than existing levels at the time, were still below the ACA standards
- Improve orientation to the institution for librarians
- Develop minimum adult literacy collections
- Establish separate library budgets nationally and across regions, while ensuring that funding is sufficient to acquire and maintain not only the mandated minimum legal materials, reference materials, and language materials, but also recreational materials like newspapers and books
- Develop annual action plans for libraries, in order to provide direction and accountability
- Develop a proper catalog and explore the feasibility of outsourcing the cataloging of existing collections to get all libraries on board with this recommendation as quickly as possible
- Move all libraries to proper facilities, as none of the sites had even the minimum space that CSC's own guideline recommends (3,685 square feet for 240 patrons or less, 4,437 square feet for a population of approximately 400) and include the site librarian in the planning process
- Hold at least one annual regional meeting of all library staff and one national meeting, possibly in connection with the Canadian Library Association (CLA) convention

STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENTS POST-NASON AND PEAT MARWICK

In 1989, Barbara Artinian and Monika McEwan, librarians in the Pacific Region, produced *Analysis, Correctional Service of Canada Institutional Library Service: Current Status, Issues and Recommendations* (1989) with help from other librarians in the region. This document is comprised of several separate parts: "Library Standards in Federal Institutions of the Pacific Region: a Working Paper;" feedback from librarians across the country

on working conditions and library concerns; survey responses; a proposed funding formula; and assorted appendices.

It should be noted that by this point in time, the influence of the 1981 Nason Report and the 1984 Peat Marwick Report could be seen in the Pacific Region. Library FTEs had gone from two to six (at six sites), and the position of regional librarian was in place. Regional Librarian Meetings were more frequent, and a Pacific Region libraries policy guidelines document was well under way. The Pacific Region had also produced a Law Library Collection Minimum Standards List and a roles and functions paper by this time. Both of these documents are included in the Artinian and McEwan paper.

The Library Standards in Federal Institutions of the Pacific Region Working Paper was presented to the Canadian Library Association's Prison Interest Group (PLIG) at the 1989 CLA convention. Following PLIG discussions, some items were deleted from the document. The working paper and the salary and benefits survey were sent to all Canadian institutional librarians in July 1989. In August 1989, the working paper and survey responses were presented as a conference paper in Paris to the Working Group on Prison Library Services of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). In December the same year, the final paper, including comments, was presented to CSC National Headquarters, the Pacific Region Headquarters, library contract agencies, and the institutional librarians across Canada. The report's funding formula received support in principle but was, unfortunately, not adopted in practice.

There appears to have been little new published on Canadian prison libraries during the 1990s. The libraries in the Pacific Region continued to work on meeting the recommendations of the previous reports, and some improvements were made in the areas of communication and raising the profile of the prison libraries.

In 2001, another national survey was conducted of prison libraries. Directed by Ann Curry of the University of British Columbia, it focused on many of the same issues included in earlier surveys but also included questions on censorship. Surveys were sent out to fifty-one institutions. The response rate was 73 percent.

In 2003, Ann Curry, with Kris Wolf, Sandra Boutilier, and Helen Chan, published an article about the findings in the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*. While the article touched briefly on subjects examined in earlier reports, the main focus was on survey findings related to collection development, censorship, and prisoner access to information.

This survey showed that some sites still did not have dedicated library budgets and that the average budget had decreased to just over four thousand dollars per year. The 2003 article also noted that national prison library guidelines and/or standards had still not been published.

THE CSC PACIFIC REGION

During the past thirty years, library services in the CSC Pacific Region have seen many changes. Progress has been made in some areas but has been lost in other areas. Unfortunately, many of the challenges first identified in the 1980s still exist. It is recognized that the regional librarians were very active in promoting and improving prison libraries and standards through the 1980s and right up to the drastic cutbacks in 1994, when staff hours were reduced by 50 percent at most sites and even 70 percent at one site. Ever since that time, the libraries have struggled to just maintain existing services and to keep their heads above water.

During the recent economic downturn, it has become very clear that public libraries in local communities are vulnerable to cuts in budgets and staffing. Despite the fact that prison libraries are mandated to support all correctional programs, including both formal and informal education, as well as to meet legislative and policy requirements for access to legal and nonlegal materials, they (like their public library counterparts) have remained vulnerable to cost-cutting measures. Unfortunately, the common public perception that a room filled with books is sufficient to operate a viable library (perhaps with an inmate clerk as the only staff) undermines progress. At times, money is spent on materials to fill the room rather than on qualified staff to facilitate access to these resources. Sadly, this practice is not restricted to the past or to just a single region. The *Directory of CSC Librarians 2010* (Public Safety Canada) shows three sites with no incumbent in the library and more sites where the library is not the sole responsibility of the librarian.

Budgets

Library budgets remain a challenge across Canada. In the Pacific Region, the libraries depend on “year-end” funds (unpredictable and not always available) to maintain viable collections. In some other regions, library funds remain rolled in with the general Education and Training budget and are equally unpredictable.

Human Resources

In 1981, the Pacific Region had only two FTE librarians. By 1989, the region had slightly more than six FTE librarians at six sites, and the position of regional librarian had been established. This progress, unfortunately, was reversed by the 1994 staff cuts. Reducing library staff by 50 percent had a significant negative impact, and for the past fifteen years the librarians in the Pacific Region have worked hard to get back lost hours. While not all the libraries are back to the former staffing level, progress has been made, and staff have been able to once again move forward on regional initiatives. Since the early 1990s, new library staff have been required to be certified library technicians, as recommended by both the Nason and Peat Marwick reports.

Standards

Some progress has also been made on the Nason and Peat Marwick calls for national standards. Current Commissioner's Directives do specify minimum standards and mandated materials for the institution libraries. The Pacific Region finalized the *Pacific Regional Library Policy Guidelines* in 1992, and the Ontario Region is currently working on similar standards. Most libraries in the Pacific Region now also have procedures manuals.

Facilities

Both Nason and Peat Marwick stated the need to include the librarian in library planning. This has indeed been the case in the Pacific Region, where site librarians were involved in the planning of new or renovated libraries at the Mission, William Head, Pacific Institution-Regional Treatment Centre, and Fraser Valley Institution for Women. During the same period, however, other site libraries lost space, but through input from the librarians, the damage was to some extent mitigated.

Statistics

During the latter part of the 1980s with FTEs at each site, the institutional libraries in the Pacific Region were able to formulate goals and priorities and to produce annual and quarterly reports on usage, collection development, and circulation. These reports ceased in the wake of the 1994 cutbacks. Instead, the Pacific Region libraries today gather usage and circulation statistics for a limited period of time and extrapolate the numbers from these samples. Collection development is monitored through the catalog and/or the request system. Most reporting on library needs, programs, and goals, is done informally at the bi-monthly Regional Librarians Meeting.

Technology

Technological advances over the last thirty years have had a significant impact on library functions, even in a prison library. This has been mostly positive, but some concerns still exist about the use of technology inside a secure prison environment and, specifically, about the extent of technology access and use by inmates.

The first personal computer-based library system in the Pacific Region came into use in 1985. It was an in-house designed system and paved the way for other systems to be implemented, after it was introduced to the librarians at a Regional Librarians Meeting.

By 1990, most libraries in the region were using an electronic database as a catalog. The increased access and searching capabilities were obvious. Specific bibliographies or reading lists could also be generated in support of the various correctional and educational programs. New booklists and other outreach tools became readily available to the inmates. For collection development and acquisition, it became easier to find and fill gaps in the collection.

Access for the Pacific Region librarians to the CSC corporate intranet and email was a gradual process. Many site libraries were not “wired” when the initial networking structure was applied. Priority at the time was on the core functions of the Correctional Service (offender management). As more corporate functions moved to the intranet, the librarians were slowly connected. The last two librarians received access in their offices in 2006. Uniform access to the corporate intranet and email in the library office made it easier for the librarians, who were located far from each other and had varying hours, to keep in touch. In addition to speeding up services to offenders and saving librarian time, this new ease of contact helped mitigate the sense of isolation mentioned by both Nason and Peat Marwick.

Today, e-mail and the regional union catalog have provided a more streamlined and efficient system for interregional interlibrary loan. This ILL system has reduced duplication of holdings and has even allowed individual libraries within the region to specialize in specific subject areas, thereby maximizing benefits and minimizing expenditures.

This “think regional” approach was a leading factor in the creation of the Pacific Region Multi-Lingual Collection. Materials in languages other than English are usually very expensive. While there is a great need for these materials, the high costs have made it prohibitive to maintain an extensive collection at each site. Inmates are also moved around a region quite often, leading to a site needing a collection in one language one day and then needing a whole new collection the next day.

In 2009, “year-end” money was used to purchase a core multilingual collection. The collection was cataloged and processed at one site, is housed at another site, and the bibliographic information resides on the same regional server that houses the union catalog, where it can be accessed from all sites. Rather than each site trying to buy a few titles (and perhaps duplicating items), one centralized multilingual collection maximizes access to these materials for offenders who need them. This year (2010), the same approach is being used for the creation of a Regional Aboriginal Collection.

Internet. The impact of the Internet on the information searching habits of the general public has also been felt within prison walls. Current legislation and policies prohibit offender access to the Internet, but where the librarian has Internet access, the Web has become a useful tool for reference and information services. The CSC does, however, allow inmate access to some electronic resources on standalone computers. All mandated legal and nonlegal documents, as well as some supplemental materials, are now available on the *Inmate Library CD-ROM* (2009).

Technology Challenges in Prison Libraries. Certain challenges are presented by society’s increased reliance on the Internet as the primary tool to disseminate and access information from government, educational

institutions, and the courts. As offenders cannot access the Internet themselves, library staff must determine how best to provide access to materials from these public bodies. A typical example is the paper copies of catalogs from postsecondary and trade schools that used to be available in prison libraries. Today most academic institutions only publish course information on their website. The prison librarians will have to find alternative ways to provide the offenders with this type of information. With the help of the IT department, some sites have loaded certain official documents onto standalone computers in the library, but this is not a long-term solution, as Web content is constantly updated.

User expectations are also a challenge in our techno-Internet-savvy age. Many offenders have had Internet access before coming to prison, at home or through the local public library or Internet café. Reference interviews are now often initiated with "Do you have access to the Internet?" or "Can you 'google' this for me?" So in addition to dealing with the traditional service challenges, the prison librarian must now also deal with the offender's expectation for instant answers (however dubious) through the Internet. Introducing offenders to the many—often more appropriate—information sources in print is often difficult, when the user insists that only a Googled answer is acceptable.

Public libraries also struggle with this problem, but their users have the option of choosing either traditional information sources or the Internet. So perhaps prison librarians have an edge here, as the offenders have no choice but to use only the traditional reference tools. The offenders are often amazed by what is available in print resources, but it is frustrating for the librarian when the user walks away saying that "I'll get my family to look it up on the Internet."

Library Programs

Since the early 1990s, the Pacific Region libraries have been able to offer a variety of programs and user services, including regular library orientations, programs on vocational and job hunting aides available in community libraries, a speaker's bureau, workshops provided by law school students and similar to legal aid in the community, library trivia hunts, and summer reading programs, again based on similar programs in the community. Staff in other departments now routinely look to their site library as a viable source for program and programming support.

In 2004, the Pacific Region librarians raised the profile of prison libraries in Canada with their "Diamonds in the Rough: Library Values Behind Bars" poster session at the Canadian Library Association/British Columbia Library Association conference in Victoria, BC. The focus of the poster session was on how the Pacific Region library policy addresses the issues of user access and privacy within the boundaries of a prison environment. The presentation was well received and was later profiled in *Let's Talk*, the

CSC in-house publication. The article contributed to increased awareness of prison libraries in general.

In 2007, in response to an increasing numbers of information requests from library school students, one of the librarians developed the *Prison libraries: A Resource Guide* (Joslin, 2007), which was posted on the CSC libraries webpage.

In 2009, Kim Rempel, librarian at the William Head site, conducted a national survey of prison libraries with a special focus on access to legal information (results still being compiled). Later that year he made a presentation at the Canadian Association of Law Libraries conference in Halifax on "Libraries in Canada's Prisons—Challenges and Perspectives."

CONCLUSION

In reviewing the current state of Canada's prison libraries (particularly in the Pacific Region), we find that they face many of the same challenges and rewards of their public library counterparts. Like public libraries, the prison libraries continue to work to improve the services they provide to their community. And like public libraries, prison libraries work to serve their community while facing financial challenges. Recent accomplishments in the Pacific Region prison libraries include the establishment of the Regional Multi-Lingual Collection (in response to an increasingly diverse ethnocultural community), and the Regional Aboriginal Collection (in support of Aboriginally sensitive programming and education).

Prison librarians are a special breed. They work in a restrictive environment that is generally not conducive to good library services. Whatever their personality types, successful prison librarians have a strong commitment to uphold and defend professional ethics and library principles—and do so in a "nonlibrary" environment. When prison librarians were asked what the most or least rewarding parts of their job were, some common themes emerged, illustrating that the challenges and rewards are often opposite sides of the same coin. Here are some examples:

Challenge: the responsibility for all aspects of library services and operations with inadequate hours and funding.

Reward: the variety of the work and the autonomy (working in a one-person library allows one to use a wide range of library skills and do a little bit of everything).

Challenge: working with demanding and at times manipulative individuals who may have very little understanding of the library as a community resource.

Reward: working with disadvantaged individuals who genuinely appreciate your services.

Challenge: creating a "normal" space in a "non-normal" work environment.

Reward: contributing in a positive way to a safe and humane environment in a prison setting.

As public libraries respond to community needs and technological advances, the bar is raised for prison libraries to emulate this public library model. Unfortunately, prison libraries in Canada have not yet reached the staffing, funding, and program levels recommended back in the 1980s. Even so, the libraries have made progress in some areas (library programs, integration with other institution programs, more cohesive collection development, written policies and procedures, and improved communication with other prison librarians).

Prison libraries continue to contribute to public safety by supporting the Correctional Services mandate to provide safe and secure control of offenders, while preparing them for reintegration into the community. Specifically, the prison libraries support this mandate by providing information and materials that help the offenders equip themselves for useful occupations, increase their competence to form sound judgments, increase their understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage, and enhance their personal and social well-being. In doing so, the prison library is a vital resource for offenders, as they prepare to reenter society as law abiding citizens.

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Jennifer Joslin is the librarian at the Pacific Institution-Regional Treatment Centre, a multi-security level facility that also serves as the Regional Reception and Assessment Centre with a population of approximately four hundred offenders). Her current projects include coordinating placement for practicum students, managing the Regional Multi-Lingual collection, and maintenance of the Union Catalogue. She has been a member of the Education Technology Committee since its founding and currently serves on the Annual Regional Writing Contest in Honour of International Literacy Day Committee. She was named the Pacific Institution Employee of the Month in September of 2007. As a partner in the Special Library Services project, Joslin wrote the successful proposal for library services in three of the Pacific Region prisons in 1993. She oversaw the initial design of the library at the new women's facility, as well as the relocation, refurbishment, and design of two other prison libraries. She has published articles and meeting reports, and her *Prison Libraries: A Resource Guide* was published on the Public Safety Canada Library website in 2007. Joslin began working in prisons in 1988 under contract with Simon Fraser University and has worked at most sites in the Pacific Region. Her previous library experience includes working for two public library systems. She is currently enrolled in the Library and Information Technology Program at Langara College.